

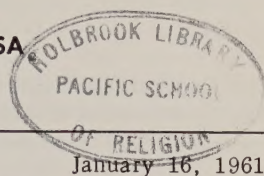
CHINA BULLETIN

of the

FAR EASTERN OFFICE

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BOOKS AND MAGAZINES ON CHINA NEEDED

The United Board reports that the libraries of Chung Chi College, Hong Kong, and Tunghai University, Taiwan, are short of books and periodicals on China in the English language, especially older volumes. Books dealing with almost any phase of Chinese life and culture would be welcome. Periodical volumes need, among others, are:

Chinese Recorder

China Journal of Arts and Science

The Lingnan Science Journal

The Yenching University Publications

The Journal of the West China Border Research Society

It is material presently out of print that is most needed and difficult to get.

If any of our readers have books or magazines of the sort described above which they would be willing to contribute, please list books by author and title, and periodicals by titles and dates and send these lists (not the material itself) to: Dr. William P. Fenn, United Board for Christian Higher Education in Asia, 475 Riverside Drive, New York 27, N.Y. The United Board will then let you know which of the materials listed they can use.

MRS. BUEGE'S REPORT

Mrs. Gerda Buege, a former China Inland Mission missionary in Szechuan, whose home is in East Germany, has visited China recently on a tour arranged by an East Berlin travel bureau. On her return she said that Christians in China today have become "a frightening minority" which must be sought with a "magnifying glass." She added, "While I have not received the impression that Christians are being forced to give up their faith, the life of the individual is so much consumed by work, socialist obligations, training courses and other activities that it must be very difficult to still find time to maintain some sort of parish life." The whole nation has, she said, but one objective - to catch up with world standards. In view of this situation, she said, it is surprising that there still are any parishes at all. She reported that in Shanghai church life was comparatively active due to the special position of the city. Although the number of churches in this city of ten million had dwindled from a former 200 to twenty today, there is still a noticeable amount of religious activity. (Reported by RNS)

MAINLAND FAMINE CONDITIONS

Reports continue to come in from the mainland of famine conditions. A letter direct from Szechuan province tells that the ration is one ounce of rice per meal for breakfast and supper, and formerly two ounces for the main midday meal, but that has now been changed to seven

Issued bi-weekly to keep mission boards and missionaries informed on Christian work in China. Information from Chinese church magazines and other Chinese sources is passed on as objectively as possible, with a minimum of interpretation. When interpretation is necessary, it is enclosed in parentheses as the comment of the editor. ANNUAL RATES: Domestic, \$2.50; Overseas, Firstclass \$4.00, Secondclass \$3.00. Airmail \$5.00 in 15¢ zone, \$7.00 in 25¢ zone.

ounces of sweet potatoes. Vegetables are practically unobtainable, so the rice and sweet potatoes must be eaten with salt. A family snapshot which accompanied this letter bore out the report, for the drawn faces and bulging eyes indicated a severe degree of undernourishment. This family was formerly quite well-to-do.

A similar letter from a church family in Foochow shows the same situation, with elderly people trying to exist on famine rations.

This condition probably bears more heavily on those who are not active workers, for we have heard from other sources that there is a considerable difference in the rations of workers and non-workers. The ration indicated above is probably for the latter.

Since the above was written the New York Times for January 8 has confirmed this description of the mainland situation. Postal authorities in Hong Kong have reported that the flow of small packages to China has reached unprecedented proportions. Food stores in Hong Kong are doing a rush business in packaged parcels of dried meat, sugar, cooking oil, noodles and other non-perishables. These packages are in response to appeals by mainland Chinese, who, risking the danger of censorship, write to relatives and friends in Hong Kong telling of the virtual disappearance from the market of meat, fish, edible oils, sugar and even vegetables. Some state that local grain stocks are dwindling rapidly, with no hope of relief from other districts. Another confirmation of this situation is seen in the number of escapees reaching Macao and Hong Kong, which volunteer workers with refugees report is bigger than usual.

PEASANT WARS AND RELIGIONS IN CHINA

In giving a Marxist interpretation to Chinese history, many of the uprisings against the established government are called peasant wars. And since many of these rebels have used religious ideas and slogans to weld their followers into a unity, the role of religion in these wars has become a subject of discussion. Sun Tso-min and Yang K'uan have advanced the idea that in a pre-Communist age religion was a necessary adjunct of these uprisings. Now an article in the Peking People's Daily for October 17, 1960, undertakes to refute that idea. The article is in five sections:

1. Religion as the opium of the people. "Religion is a kind of social ideology. It is a reflection of the objective world in the mind of man, though such reflection is neither faithful nor scientific. Religion is averse to knowing the world as it actually looks, but reflects the objective world with distortion, inversion and error... Religion advocates a passive attitude toward natural calamities and social inequities and thus prevents man from correctly understanding and actively transforming the world."

Ruling classes have always used religion to consolidate their power. The religions which they make use of all advocate peace among the classes, defend the established order of government, and preach meek submission to one's oppressors and patient endurance of one's poverty and misery. For example, in the Taoist classic Tai P'ing Ching the classification of human society into nobles and commons, the exalted and the base, is "a fixed and immutable rule of nature, a divine arrangement which no human power can alter."

Christianity harps on this same string. "According to its teachings, one should not resist one's enemy but should on the contrary love him, bless him and pray for him." Then after quoting several verses from the Sermon on the Mount, including the turning of the left cheek, the article continues, "All this has been claimed to be the will of God. Very obviously, if all laborers act according to the will of God, there will be no mass movement of resistance or mass war of revolution."

However, the thousands of insurrections that have taken place show that the effect of religion in this regard is very limited. It may poison the understanding of the masses for a time, but it cannot "extinguish the flame of their revolution."

2. Characteristics of the peasant war religions. Although religion is fundamentally poisonous, as described above, still it has to cover up its poison with an attractive coat of honey, and this appears in the form of "advocacy of equality, praise of light, and promise of happiness in

heaven." All that the peasants needed to do was to transfer these ideals from heaven to earth and then they would have a religion useful for the purposes of revolution. For example, the Yellow Turban insurrection in the last days of the Eastern Han Dynasty used Taoism, Han Shan-t'ung used the White Lotus religion in the last days of the Yuan Dynasty, the Tai P'ing rebellion used Christianity and the Boxers used the White Lotus. These rebels either reinterpreted a religion already in use among the ruling class, or else made a new religion for themselves.

These peasant religions all had a strong fighting character. Even the "God-worshipping" religion of the Tai P'ing Rebellion, though founded on Christianity, did not preach love for one's enemies. "On the contrary, it gave the generic name 'infernal monster' to all oppressors and exploiters in the world and stated that the infernal monsters were something 'which all our brothers and sisters in the world must unite together to destroy, the sooner the better.'" Because these religions advocated the overthrow of the established order they were always banned by the ruling class. They had both a negative and a positive function. "While advocating firm struggle against the enemy, they favored internal cooperation, unity and friendship." They were also usually characterized by Puritan ideals.

3. Must a peasant war be combined with religion? Here the writer takes issue with Sun and Yang referred to above, and claims that the religion found in peasant wars never plays a vital role. It is purely incidental. And there are also many peasant wars in which the peasants have not used any religious coloring whatever, thus showing that religion is not a necessary element. So he concludes that "just as religion cannot extinguish the revolutionary flame of the masses, so it cannot unleash any revolutionary storm of the masses."

4. What role religion did play. The writer admits that they often did play a useful part in the initial stages of a rebellion. In the last days of the Eastern Han Dynasty, the Religion of Peace deceived the enemy into thinking it was a harmless religious movement, and thus large numbers of people were rallied together. The Tai P'ing Rebellion began with the members of the "God Worshipping Society." But later they did not need to use religion for their purposes, and enrolled the rank and file members of the non-Christian Heaven and Earth Society, men who had no idea what the God Worshipping Society was like.

Religion also often furnished useful slogans. For example, the Tai P'ing leaders used the following religious words: "The whole world is the family of God, our Father in heaven and our Lord above. Nobody on earth can claim anything as his own. Everything belongs to our Lord above. With the Lord disposing of our things, there will be equality among all and plenty for all. Such is the purpose for which God, our Father in heaven and our Lord above, has sent the true ruler of peace to save the world."

But since these religions were mere "superstitious and negative ideologies", they did not correctly explain the actual conditions, and thus their useful role tended to disappear. Thus in the Tai P'ing Rebellion Yang Hsiu-ching's claim to be the incarnation of the Heavenly Father strengthened internal unity at the outset, but was later a factor in promoting disunity.

5. How revolutionary thought is related to religious doctrine. "In religious doctrines one frequently comes across attractive terms such as 'peace', 'equality', 'kingdom of heaven', 'paradise of happiness' etc. On the part of religion, these are no more than the tempting fragrance of opium. On the part of the oppressed laboring people, they are problems pressing for solution. While putting forward these attractive terms for fascinating people, religion at the same time tells people to strive for their realization in the next world by atonement, penance and prayer, and thus leads them away from actual struggle. However, once they had been put forward, such terms as 'peace', 'equality' and 'kingdom of heaven' could not but exert an influence over the oppressed people, and they actually played a definite role in enlightening them." The use of Manichæan ideas at the close of the Yuan Dynasty and of Christianity in the Tai P'ing Rebellion are cited as instances of this process. "But it is impermissible to conclude from this that the doctrines and the slogans of the peasant wars were deduced from religious doctrines, or that religious doctrines aroused the storm of peasant revolutions."

Here the writer refers to the chronology of Hung Hsiu-ch'uan, founder of the God Worshipping Society of the Tai P'ing Rebellion. Hung read the Christian pamphlet "Good Words of Advice for the World" in 1843, but did not get a complete Bible until 1847. His first rebellious

poems were written before 1843, and before 1847 he had written three important essays outlining his political thought. Hence we may conclude that Hung Hsiu-ch'uan had a clear revolutionary thought before he knew anything about Christianity.

The incidental nature of the religious coloring is also exemplified by reference to Wang Hsiao-po, who led a revolution in the time of the Northern Sung Dynasty. He said, "I detest to see the inequality between the rich and the poor, and I shall now level things for you." This, the writer points out, was a pure political slogan which did not contain any element of religion. He adds that "no religious doctrine has ever advocated the idea of giving the land on earth to the peasants."

The writer thinks he has proved that religion has played only a minor and incidental role in these wars. However, he admits the tentative nature of his argument by concluding, "The relation between peasant wars and religion in China is a rather complicated question which has to be probed further."

NEW ZEALAND PRESBYTERIANS ON RECOGNITION

The General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church of New Zealand has reiterated its play that the New Zealand government support diplomatic recognition of the government of Communist China and her admission to the United Nations. Terming the present situation "farcical" the Assembly stressed that such action is increasingly urgent and that the United Nations is the framework within which resolution of serious international situations should be sought. "Only when men are brought face to face," the resolution states, "can real communication occur."

MISSIONARY NEWS

Miss Irene Hutchinson of the British Friends Mission, formerly of Chengtu and more recently serving in Hong Kong, died in Carlisle, England, on November 29, 1960, on the eve of her intended return to Hong Kong.

CHURCH NEWS

A Peking broadcast, reported by RNS from Hong Kong, stated on December 28 that Christmas in Communist China this year "passed almost unnoticed by Chinese citizens." This is in contrast to the earlier years of the Communist regime, when Peking seemed anxious to have the rest of the world believe that church life there was proceeding normally, and accordingly reported every year the special musical services and the caroling bands of Chinese Christian students that marked their Christmas celebration. This time the only special Christmas services which the broadcast referred to were of foreigners in Peking, although it did say that the Anglican Cathedral in Peking was hung with "red and gold banners with Christmas messages in Chinese." Very few Christmas trees were seen anywhere in the country, and "their cost averaged \$60. each."

David H. Adeney, of the Inter-Varsity Fellowship in Hong Kong, received a Christmas card from a former fellow worker on the mainland, with a Christmas message on it which Mr. Adeney translated as follows: "With memories of the past and thoughts of the things which are yet to come we commit all to God. The material pleasures of past happy festivals are gone, never to return, but God causes us to receive spiritual blessings. Although the days are uneventful, in our spirits there is a burning fire. Do pray for us, especially for our children. Please pay the price of effective prayer. May the all-powerful God at this Christmas time and in the coming months bless you and your family."

Other news from the mainland which has come to Mr. Adeney in Hong Kong is reported by him in this article in the December Japan Harvest: "A lady arrived recently in Hong Kong whose husband, a Lutheran pastor, had died as a result of treatment received in prison. A large group of Christian workers were arrested recently and charged with being 'rightists'. Those who confessed were sent off to labor camps, while those who refused to confess were questioned day and night, and several, including a CIM pastor, collapsed and died. The twenty-year-old son of the Lutheran pastor after his father's death said to his mother, 'My father was a shepherd of the flock, and I can never leave the faith.' In that particular area the churches had been closed down, and in one district the Christians were given three days in which to surrender their Bibles and hymn books, which were described as reactionary materials. Mr. Adeney adds that this represented local over-zealousness rather than general policy.